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Istook Applauds Increased Border Security Measures Included in Supplemental

Washington, DC – Today, Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK) joined the majority of the U.S. House of Representatives in passing an \$82-billion emergency supplemental wartime appropriations bill, 368-58. Istook praised the border security measures included to keep our homeland safe.

“This bill includes not only significant funds for fighting terrorism abroad, but also common sense reforms to help us combat terrorists both inside and outside our borders,” said Istook. **“Right now, terrorists and other criminals are exploiting the weaknesses in our system to escape detection and move freely about our country.”**

The final bill included the vast majority of a border security measure, the REAL ID Act, which Istook co-sponsored earlier this year. Reforms include strengthening asylum laws which terrorists have used numerous times in recent years to gain access to the United States.

The bill also gives the Secretary of Homeland Security the authority to complete the construction of a 14-mile border fence between Mexico and San Diego, the single most heavily-trafficked area by criminal illegal aliens. The construction of the fence has been delayed for over 8 years due to environmental lawsuits.

The bill sets minimum information and security requirements for the issuance of state driver's licenses. If state driver's licenses do not meet the minimum standards, they will not be accepted by the federal government as an adequate form of identification for air travel and other purposes. Under the standards, applicants must prove “lawful presence” in the United States in order to get a permanent driver's license; those without proof of lawful presence may still get a temporary license to drive but it may not be used for federal identification.

Today's action in the House follows the approval of Istook's subcommittee yesterday of 1,500 new border patrol officers, 568 more immigration enforcement officers, and expanded detention facilities to handle increased arrests. These measures were included in the FY 2006 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill with the active support of Istook, the vice-chairman of the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee.

“These new resources will cost over a billion dollars a year,” Istook said, **“But this means dramatic improvement in border security and in enforcing our immigration laws within the country.”**